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SUNDAY
DECEMBER 20, 1953

Last night Laniel regained many of his lost votes and some commentators think he may be elected on the seventh ballot this afternoon. Heaven knows what promises, deals, understandings and the like may have been made by Presidential candidates during this crisis. Never in the history of the Republic has the struggle for the Elysée lasted so long. It illustrates the fundamental discords in domestic politics.

We went to the country for lunch with the Windsors. John Fowler, who came for drinks with us a couple of days ago, has, with Nancy Lancaster, been helping with the decorating of their dining room. They have bought a mill near the Valley of the Chevreuse, about 30 minutes drive from Paris. They acquired it from Drian, the painter. It was restored about the middle of the 18th Century and, under the Windsors, has undergone extensive alterations. The gardens -- the Duke is a passionate gardener -- promise extremely well. There are several dwellings, and the whole compound has the air of a [redacted] village. It is [redacted] attractive, with a little river running under as well as alongside the house. One building has a large and a small living room, a dining room, two bedrooms and baths, two servants' rooms, kitchen and pantry. Another serves as a huge study for Windsor, with a pantry adjoining it and facilities for eating outdoors. Then there is a bachelor wing (an old cow barn) with two bedrooms and baths, and a guest-house with the same plus a living room. In a separate house are eleven servants' rooms.

Margaret Biddle was the only other guest. She deserted immediately after lunch for Versailles, where E. and I followed later after a thorough and fascinating tour of our host's premises.

No progress was made on the seventh ballot this afternoon for the Presidency. Laniel is still about 50 votes short of the number necessary to win, and Naegelin is trailing him by a hundred votes. The Parliamentarians meet again tonight for the eighth try.

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Nancy Mitford Rodd rode to town with us. She has the Versailles fever in every respect. She spent most of the year there in a pension writing her book on Madame de Pompadour.

Finished toright General Heusinger's book "Hitler and the OKW". This, together with General Speidel's book, which he sent me this week, on the Normandy invasion are well worth reading. These two German generals throw much light on Hitler's personality and appalling errors of judgment in military matters. I have also read this week Eugene Lyons' "Our Secret Allies", given me by Vadim Makaroff, which describes, and to some extent documents, the fatal German error of having destroyed by harsh, brutal [redacted] stupid conduct and policy the tremendous asset offered by disaffection of masses of Russians for their Communist régime. He has a good deal to say about General Vlassov and the Russian prisoners of war who voluntarily fought in the German army. One of the most short-sighted, [redacted] darkest and [redacted] shameful chapters in our history (as also in British annals) relates to our action in turning over these men, regardless of their own will, after capture by us, to a Government they had in effect betrayed and from which they could expect no mercy.

Hitler might well have won his war in Russia if he had treated his "secret allies" there with a modicum of wisdom and psychological appreciation.

E. went back to Versailles tonight. Laniel, on the eighth ballot, was 22 votes short of the number necessary to elect.

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